Pax

THE WAY OF PEACE AND AMITY AMONG DISSENTING BRETHREN.

By a Brother in CHRIST.

LONDON,
Printed, MDCXLIX.

BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA

AN EXPEDIENT. TO PRESERVE PEACE

and Amitie, among dissenting BRETHREN.

SEeing it hath pleased Almighty GOD, by a Brother in CHRIST; at this time to put a stop to the effusion of Bloud, so prodigally powred out in our native Country, and thereby given a hope of speedily stating the whole Kingdome, in a firme and durable Peace: It doth not a little grieve my soul, that this happinesse should be clouded or retarded, under the pretence of Religion, which is the best cimenter of Peace. But herein I take comfort, that God hath his own work, no lesse in these controversies, then before hee had in the warres, and will reap glory out of both. We must neither start nor stagger, when we see Schismes and Heresies rise, in the visible Church; They are the Tares, which the envious man soweth, among Gods Wheat; and *Christ* hath fore-warned us, and so hath his Apostles, that through the rage of Satan, and corruption of men, there must of necessity in all times and ages arise scandals, dissentions, and Heresies in the Church; for the exercise of the godly, that their faith might be proved and manifested to the world, by holding their ground, and cleaving to the truth. Yea, the very Gospell of *Christ*, which in it selfe, is a Gospell of peace, by the bloud

of the Son, reconciling of us, to the Father. Meeteth with such Malignancy and opposition in the world, that to the true professors of it, it becometh a Gospel of warre and hatred, and persecution. This is the condition of the faithfull, to be alwayes in outward troubles, wherein were they not supported with inward peace, they were of all men, most miserable. Upon this ground *Martin Luther*, that undanted champion of the truth, being taxed by the Emperour in a great Councell, that he was the man, who by his Doctrine had disturbed the long continued Peace in *Germany*: Answered, that what others thought he could not tell, but it rejoyced his heart, to see that there was divisions, about, the word of God; for Christ came not to bring peace but the Sword. By all this it appeareth, that as every true beleever must expect tribulation in this world, so hee shall have peace with God, and ought to have peace and communion one with another; *Christ* when he left his Disciples, left them Peace for a Legacy, and a commandement, to love one another; we are also frequently exhorted, to follow after Peace; to bee of one mind, and preserve the unity of the spirit, in the bond of Peace. How comes it then about that we see so many minds, among brethren, who will all passe for the Disciples of *Christ*; and that from the diversity of minds, wee see, so many rents and separations, whereby the bond of Peace is broken, and the spirits of men, disunited! Certainly when it commeth so far, it can proceed from no other root then from our lusts, which war in our earthly members. Otherwise difference of judgement, among true beleevers, in the sincere search of truth, may well stand with unity of affections, without breach of Peace. For it is manifest enough, that the true beleevers over the whole world, are not of one mind, in all things that concerne Religion, and the worship of God. Witnesse the severall formes of outward worship, among all Nations, no lesse various then their fashions. And this may also happen, among the faithfull, aswell in the same, as in severall Nations; nay if we consider it home, wee shall find, the like difference in our selves, that we need not wonder at it, in others; for what Christian is there, who in pursuit and study for truth, observeth not in himself,

degrees,

degrees, and diverſities of judgement; every day teacheth knowledge, this life being a time of growth, not of perfection; nevertheleſſe, no man hateth himſelf, becauſe he formerly knew not ſo much, as now he doth, but rather praiſeth God, for having revealed to him, a greater meaſure of knowledge by this rule, wee ſhould deale with others, as we do with our ſelves, for that is the rule of Charity. We are all Gods building, and albeit, they may chance to differ among themſelves. They are not for that to make a breach in the building; but in Love and Peace, ſuffer their opinions, to bee tryed, by the word of God, making that the decider, not the breeder of controverſies.

This being premiſed, I will proceed to the ſubject, lying before me, and take my beginning, from the beginning it ſelf.

Almighty God doing all his own works in order, was pleaſed to make Man, a ſociable creature; firſt in himſelf, aſſociating an earthly and heavenly nature, that one might guide and governe the other; and himſelfe receive glory from both. Then by ingrafting in that compounded nature, rules of ſpirituall and humane duty, whereby he might be fitted for a well-being, in the ſociety of others.

For as the conjunction of fleſh and ſpirit, though parts far differing in nature, make one man; ſo the conjunction of many men, though of ſeverall ages, complections, humors, paſſions, callings and degrees, make up a common-wealth, for the good of all, in their temporall well-being. Even ſo likewiſe, the conjunction of many ſpirits and minds of men, though diſſenting in opinions wayes and ſtrength of judgement, yet aymeing at the ſame end, by faith in *Chriſt*, to attain ſalvation. Maketh a common union or a Church, for the good of all, in their eternall wel-being. Fleſh alone, nor ſpirit alone, cannot make a man, but the union of both, no more can a Common-wealth by it ſelf, nor a Church by it ſelf, make men temporally and eternally happy, but the unity and harmony of both. They are ſo conjoyned and intwined together, that as the ſoule is in the body, ſo is the Church in the Common-wealth: ſingle they cannot ſubſiſt. For there never was nor can there be, any multitude of men, that bodied themſelves,

into a Common-wealth, who agreed not in some kind of Religion; neither can any multitude of men body themselves, into a Church, but they must be subject to some kind of government. These two cannot be separated, without the ruine of both. Seperation destroying Society, wherein consisteth the happinesse of man; for in heaven, we cannot bee happy alone, nor on earth without society. These principles are written by the God of order, in the tables of humane nature, which are commonly called, the light or the Law of nature. But sin and time having so sullyed that Character, that it was scarce legible by posterity. God was pleased to revive it againe, to his peculiar people; writing it, with his own finger, in Tables of stone, to authorize and moralize it, to all generations, for their good, therein giving power to the Magistrate to take care, for the keeping and preserving, of both Tables; placing our duty to him, between our duty to God, and towards our neighbour, that hee might looke, for the good of man both wayes. Our duty to God, is contayned in fewer precepts, but more words; it seeming necessary, that God should explaine himselfe, in his own cause, leaving no power to any man, to adde or diminish, or interpret his Lawes, but by his own word; which made *Moses*, though he were a Law-giver in *Israel*, yet he would not judge, the gatherer of sticks upon the Sabbath day, without consultation with the Lord. Before the written Law, every father of a family was both Priest and Magistrate, to looke to both; and the greater the family or society was so much higher was the Magistrate, and reverenced with more honour, as being the common parent, caring for the whole Country. This Law therefore of Nature, being the very dictate, of God himself, may not improperly be termed a divine Law. There were also other Lawes, which God prescribed by his servant *Moses*, to the people of *Israel*, politicke and Iudiciall Lawes, for preserving humane society, and governing the Common-wealth; and Ceremoniall Lawes, for the outward manner and forme of his publike worship; for performance whereof, he ordained divers Sacrifices and Sacrificers; allotting maintainance for them both.

But

But when the time fore-appointed came, that God would restore man, to that happineſſe, he had deſervedly loſt, by the ſin of the firſt *Adam*; he ſent his onely Son *Ieſus Chriſt* the ſecond *Adam*, in the fleſh; who after he had manifeſted his divine power to the world, by his Doctrine and miracles, did by his laſt words on the Croſſe, and by the firſt viſible teſtimony of the power of his death finiſh and conſummate the Law, and rent from the top to the bottome, the vaile of ſeparation; by both declaring, the neceſſity of types, and ceremonies, places and times of worſhip, differences of people, Sacrifices and Sacrificers, fixed and impropriated maintainance; for any of them, was no longer to bee continued ſtrictly in the letter, although a morall equity ſhadowed by them was to be perpetuall. Neither did our Saviour in the conſtitution of his Evangelicall Church, revive any of them, nor ordain any ſet form of worſhip, rule for goverment, or a certained and ſpeciall maintainance for his Miniſters; but only repaired and reſtored man, to that way and manner of worſhip, which *Adam* had in his innocency, preſcribing him, to ſerve God the Father of ſpirits, in ſpirit and in truth, without otherwiſe confining him to time, place, geſture, poſture, or other circumſtances, which of their own nature are not permanently confineable. In like ſort, the bleſſed Apoſtles, whom *Chriſt* ſent into the world, to publiſh the glad tydings of Salvation, laid no other foundation, as neceſſary thereunto, then *Ieſus Chriſt*, and what he had laid himſelf, for they were only maſter builders, on that corner ſtone *Chriſt Ieſus*. What they declared to any people converted to the Goſpel concerning any rule of order, about the outward man, or his Chriſtian behaviour, in publike ſervice; it was only a temporary adviſe, ſutable to the times, Countries, and occaſions, wherein they lived; not univerſally binding to all Nations, and generations to come. In their dayes, there was neither Chriſtian State, nor Chriſtian Magiſtrate, nor any publike power, to countenance or appoint the outward government of the Church; in default whereof, it was neceſſary for them, to make ſuch orders and conſtitutions as might ſerve, for thoſe preſent times; nevertheleſſe, as *Chriſt* himſelf, took upon him, no civill authority, ſo, gave hee

none; to his Apoſtles, nor they, to the Miniſters ſucceeding. For when *Chriſt* was required, to divide an inheritance, betwixt two brothers, he asked with indignation, who had made him a Judge or divider over them; and when the caſe of the Inceſtuous perſon, fell out at *Corinth*, St. *Paul* inflicted no temporall puniſhment upon him, only adviſed the brethren, that whiles hee ſtood obſtinate againſt all reproof, to ſhun his company, and caſt him out of their communion, that the ſhame thereof, making him ſenſible of his ſinne, it might beget repentance; and make him returne, to the fellowſhip of true beleevers. I verily thinke, that if all the directions, which the Apoſtles have left recorded in Scripture, were laid in one view together; no man, nor multitudes of men, how learned ſoever could collect, or frame out of them all, an exact body of Church government, in all the parts and Circumſtances thereof, to bee impoſed as a divine, binding, infallible rule, upon all Chriſtian Churches and Kingdomes, in the world. Indeed where we meet, with any Councels or conſtitutions of the bleſſed Apoſtles, who were holy men, indued with more immediate power, from *Chriſt*, with a larger meaſure of the ſpirit of truth, and conſequently with a greater certainty of judgment, then any of their Miniſteriall ſucceſſors; we may rely upon them, and make them our patternes; only remembring the diſtinction of times, that the Apoſtolicall Church, was in infancy, and under perſecution, and the *Engliſh*, in full growth and dominion; in ſo much, that in the framing of Eccleſiaſticall orders, an eye and regard muſt ever bee had, to the civill Government, which alwayes aymeth at the publike good, both of Church and State, wherein the Church is lodged. The Miniſters doubtleſſe, have power by their office, to adviſe and inſtruct, exhort and rebuke out of the word, in a brotherly way, but it is as doubtleſſe, that the power is in the Chriſtian Magiſtrate, upon hearing their advice, to conſtitute and eſtabliſh, under the naturall notion of order, ſuch decrees, as upon due debate, and deliberation, they ſhall find moſt wholſome and agreeable to the preſent State. This is alſo to be obſerved, that no man ought to take unto himſelf, the office and honour, to Miniſter for his brethren, in things pertaining

ing

ing unto God, unleſſe hee be lawfully called thereunto. *Chriſt* himſelf, was ſent by the Father, and annointed by the ſpirit, to his heavenly office; by *Chriſt*, the holy Apoſtles were ſent into the world, from whom they had their immediate Commiſſion, and the bleſſed Apoſtles following their pattern, did not only ſend and appoint Paſtors over all Churches in their preſent times; but alſo left rules and directions, for ordaining all others, for the time to come, till the worlds end. I make no queſtion, but God doth in our dayes, call and ſtirre up many to this holy office, by particular motions of his Spirit; yet that exempteth not the perſons ſo called, from manifeſting and approving their vocation, according to the rules left in Scripture: where we are commanded, to try the ſpirits of men, whither they be of God; and the Spirits of the Prophets, peculiarly ſuch as are called to the Miniſtery, are ſubject to the Prophets, as fitting to be tryed and examined by them, who by long experience; and without reproach, have converſed in the Church, and diſpenced the miſteries of Salvation.

From this brief and plaine deduction, I ſhall lay down ſome few Poſitions, as ground-lines of the diſcourſe enſuing.

1. *That God hath by his Son, taken away all ties of neceſſity, for obſerving any part or parcell of the Ceremoniall Law.*
2. *That God by Chriſt, hath reſtored man to that ſpirituall worſhip, which* Adam *had in time of his Innocency.*
3. *That Chriſt hath not appointed, any ſet or abſolute forme of Government in his Church, binding to all times and Nations.*
4. *That whatſoever the Apoſtles wrote concerning outward Government, it was not, in nature of an univerſall Law, but only by way of order and advice, anſwerable to theſe Primitive times and occaſions.*
5. *That the Miniſters of the Church, as they are Miniſters, have no temporall Power, Iudicature, or maintenance poſitively and particularly alotted them, by Chriſt or his Apoſtles, but only in the generall, that it be ſufficient and plentifull, that thereby they may be examples unto others of hoſpitality and good workes, learning*

learning the manner and ſpeciall determination, to the Chriſtian Magiſtrate and the Lawes of the Land.

6. *That the Chriſtian Magiſtrate hath the higheſt power, of ordering and governing the Church of God, which is a viſible company, not ontly of Miniſters and Officers, but of all Beleevers; and is intruſted to him, foreſmuch, as the Church is in the Common-wealth, and not the Common-wealth in the Church.*

7. *Whoſoever hath a Miſſion, to undertake the Miniſtery, ought firſt to find himſelf inwardly called, then undergo a lawfull Tryall, and receive approbation, with the prayers and benediction of the Presbitery.*

Now concerning this great controverſie in our Commonwealth, about the government of the Church. I ſhall from theſe Principles, according to the ſmall ability God hath given me, unbyaſſed, by any opinion or affection, to any kind of Government, nor yet for any covetous, nor ambitious deſire or deſigne in my ſelf, but meerly ayming at the good of Gods Church and of my Country; ſet down, how I conceive, our ſupream Magiſtrate; may eſtabliſh ſuch a Church government, as might preſerve Amity among Brethren, yet not oppugne any rules Chriſt hath left behind him.

The two houſes of Parliament, have already, upon ripe deliberation, paſſed an Ordinance for a Presbyteriall government, with all the limitations thereof: Which government I am verily perſwaded; if it be duly executed, will prove the beſt Moderator, betwixt diſſenting Brethren. For it is ſuch a government, as taketh away the ill and exorbitance of any other, reſerving that which is good in them, and ſo much the better it ought to be liked; becauſe it diſliketh thoſe parties that oppoſe it; for ſurely hee is eſteemed the beſt and moſt unpartiall Moderator, who in reconciling parties in ſuch indifferences diſpleaſeth them all; yet if this government, may not have ſo much as an Vmpires power, to conſtrain obedience; or elſe putteth not, that power in practiſe; then it will be vilified, and of no eſteem.

There-

Therefore that it may not prove a dead useleſſe letter, I doe firſt conceive, that it ſhould be eſtabliſhed with Peralties, and put in preſent execution, and made poſitive; without allowing a limited time unto it for approbation. For without that, it may be altered in whole or in part, at the Judgement of the Makers; but with that, it would leave every man, doubtfull and indifferent, which will leſſen or take away, the true value, and operation of it.

In the next place, I conceive, as an eſpeciall wheel, of this motion, and a ſtrong fortification of the Government; that care be taken to keep and incourage the Miniſters of the word, in a perpetuall and conſtant practiſe, of their Function; and to remove all occaſions, which might any way divert them, from their holy calling.

Howſoever it comes about, I know not, but certain it is, that ſithence, the Church was poyſoned, with a temporall revenue and carnall eſtimation, given to Miniſters, for their maſters ſake; Pride and covetouſneſſe, have predominated amongſt them; who have bin, and ever will bee; the roots of much evill, and combuſtions in thoſe States and Churches, where they have had any power; ſo farre, as forgetting their calling, and the patterne of *Chriſt*, they have ever bin obſerved, for the maintenance of their ſecular pomp and greatneſſe, to bee the chiefe hinderers of Reformation, to the purity and humility of the Goſpell; knowing it muſt firſt begin at themſelves. Therefore for the rooting out and preventing ambition among them, it might bee good to take away thoſe titles of ſeparation and diviſion, which have had their originall from *Rome*. As to be called Clergy, as if they were holy and the people prophane; or Divines, as if they were all heavenly, and not formed, of the ſame earth, with the people; certainly they can have no higher title, then to be called Miniſters of the Goſpell; bringing from God to man, the glad tydings of reconciliation and Peace. For place and dignities, they are either Officiall, which are already taken away; or Perſonall, which ſhould be left, to the voluntary diſcretion of every man; for if in humility, they ſtrive to go behind all men in place, and before them in goodneſſe, the people

will be ready to give, even their eyes, in testimony of their love and estimation of them. I shall forbeare in this place to set down particularly, how Covetuousnesse may bee also removed from the Ministery; because the remedy thereof, as of many other things conducing to the good of the Church; how Religion may bee kept and perpetuated in truth and purity; freed from the danger of relapsing to Popery; how the Ministers may be for ever provided with a plentifull maintenance over all the Kingdome, how their Widowes and Orphans, (if there be need) may be relieved, are already plainly and largely laid down, in another Treatise, by a well-wisher, to the Peace of our Sion; which waiteth only for a fit occasion to bee produced. Wherein no new charge is laid upon the people; but only part of the pious donations of our Ancestors to the Church, and good uses, are rectifyed and reduced.

This being done, it may then seeme necessary, so to hedge and defend this Government, held forth by Parliament; that it may neither receive damage, from Enemies without, nor bee uncharitably torne and shattered, by Schismes and opinions within.

It hath pleased God so miraculously to blesse this Kingdome; that we have thrown off the yoke of *Rome*, which neither we nor our Fathers could bear. The Pope, and the Bishops, the head, and the taple, are sent back from whence they came. The gap which they had made, is by Gods goodnes, and care of this Parliament, filled up, with a moderate Presbyteriall government, sufficiently armed to keep out the wild Boare, that destroyed our Vineyard, and that common implacable enemy from returning. But there are some little Foxes yet among us, that earth in our ground; and annoy our Vineyard, and by craft or rudenesse, weaknesse or wilfulnesse, bring scandals upon our holy profession. That therefore; our Church may injoy her peace, and bee onely Militant against sin and Satan. The Magistracie must take care, to preserve it from disturbance. As the present conjuncture of our Church standeth; they who seeme most to distast or oppose this kind of government, are known amongst us, by the name of dissenting Brethren; which are of two sorts. Rigid Presbyterians, and

Independants. I know not, how nor by whom these names, were invented, but I make use of them, as current termes, by which they are distinguished. Though indeed, in one seeming regard, disclaiming as some say the power of the Magistrate, they are both Independants, in effect; for so they both would hang on their own hinges, nor have any other judge of their Religious actions, but themselves; a thing wholly inconsistent with our civil Government. Of the rigid Presbyterians, we may account, as of younger brethren, men and minds neerer a kin to ours: yet rather ayming to invest themselves, with Will and Power, then, in humility submit to the Ordinances of the Magistrate, who is the Ordinance of God. Yea, they seem to bee so greedy of this absolute power over the actions and Consciences of men, that rather then want it, they will derive their right from *Jesus Christ*, making it *Iure divino* to be in themselves. This was also the Bishops claime, and these brethren seem to set up, Episcopacy disguised; for they drive at the same ends, shunning to give an account of their actions to the supreame Magistrate, and subjecting all men, to a seperated government of their own erection; but because I have already shown, that no such divine sanction ratifyed by *Christ* or his Apostles, can be found, in the records of holy Scripture; and I shall hereafter prove more at large, that this pretence, directly crosseth, and supplanteth the Ordinance and obedience of the civill Magistrate, which are indeed *Jure divino*. I shall desire these our brethren, at their leysure, to let us know, whither *Christ* did ever appoint any thing to bee universally received *jure divino*, which was not necessary to salvation; and whither lawfull obedience to the Magistrate in outward government of the Church, neither adding nor diminishing from the precepts of *Christ*, necessary to salvation; be an impediment thereunto, or prejudice to any mans Conscience. In the meane time, be they intreated, in the feare of God, and by the love of brethren, to lay aside these ungrounded opinions, and prefer the Peace and Unity of the Church, before any needlesse disputes, which may breed a rupture in the Common-wealth. The other sort called Independants, goe a degree further, most of them refusing to mingle with us, in the Ordinances

dinances of Gods worſhip, and Communion of Saints, and when they are deſired to ſhew their reaſons, their ſtrongeſt plea is, that ſo long, as they are not convinced in their judgement, they ought not, to bee conſtrained in their Conſciences, nor forced, to aſſent to that, which they diſapprove; And this indeed is no unbrotherly plea, but ſome ſay they ſtay not there, requiring further a liberty of Conſcience, not only to be ſubject, or not ſubject, to the ſaid Government, but to have alſo a toleration, to ſet up another government againſt it, under the ſame authority, that diſallowes it, telling us that wee ought not, to *bruiſe the broken reed, nor quench the ſmoaking Flax*, nor offend our weak brethren, for whom *Chriſt* dyed.

Whether this bee (as ſome ſay) only a popular flag, to call in multitudes, to the Standard of liberty or not, I ſhall beſtow a little time, to ſearch and ſift, this point to the Bran: and for the more orderly cleering thereof, I will lay down, as I have formerly done, ſome few aſſertions which I preſume, will not bee denyed, on either ſide; the opening whereof, will diſcover the truth, wee ſeek for, and make the objections, that obſcure it, vaniſh.

1. *That the nature of Conſcience is ſo free in it ſelfe, that it cannot be conſtrained, by any Power of man.*
2. *That there is no Rule, to bind the Conſcience, but onely the infallible word of God.*
3. *That the Chriſtian Magiſtrate judging and decreeing by that Rule, ought to be obeyed, for Conſcience ſake.*

FOr the firſt point, it will not be amiſſe to looke into the nature of Liberty, and then of Conſcience, from whence will appeare the unconſtrainednesse thereof. Liberty in generall is a faculty of the Will, whereby it is enabled to accept or refuſe any medium or object repreſented to it as conducible to its end. This Liberty is taken divers wayes; there is a Naturall, a Civill and a Supernaturall or Divine. Naturall Liberty wherein we are borne, is a faculty of willing and nilling, flying or follow-

ing,

ing, chuſing or refuſing, doing or not doing any thing in order to the conſervation of a naturall State. The ſubject thereof is properly the Will, and the objects good or evill in order to preſervation. Civill liberty is a freedome which we exerciſe under the conſtitutions of ſome Politicall ſociety. The Naturall liberty of every particular man, would bee the greateſt ſervitude of all. Hence happily wee have *Leges a legando*, which doe not permit us the roving liberty of Nature, to chooſe or refuſe, doe or not doe what naturally we liſt. The Will cannot be conſtrained in the act of willing (for it were a contradiction to will unwillingly) but by a Civill power it may bee reſtrained from the effect in ſome penalty preſcribed. It's to be obſerved, that this Civill liberty in ſome reſpects, is both larger and narrower then the Naturall: It is larger, becauſe in a Civill conſtitution the preſervation of all men is better caution'd and cared for: And it is narrower, becauſe many things which wee might all naturally doe, are reſtrained by the lawes of Society.

Here is therefore a Liberty, but ſtill under ſome power coercive, or rather corrective of Naturall liberty: So that wee may well ſay, when a man is releaſed out of Priſon, hee is ſet at liberty, though he be ſtill under the Civill tye of the Law; and when he hath payed his debts, that hee is freed of his bonds, yet ſo as alwayes to be bound with thoſe of civill Society: And becauſe we are exempted from the will and tyranny of the Prince, wee are called Free-men, having the liberty and protection of our Lawes, though otherwiſe, they bind us to obedience: In this place all kind of Diſpenſations, Pardons, releaſments, abſolutions, exemptions and the like; are ſaid to give us a Civill liberty, by taking of ſome reſtraint. Supernaturall liberty, is the reſtitution from Naturall ſervitude; for pure nature, wherein Man was created, had a perfect Liberty; but nature corrupted by ſin, fell into ſlavery; from whence, it can onely bee reſtored by Grace.

Conſcience, is a faculty of the Soule, which ſitteth in the throne, and hath a ſuperintendency, and dominion over the whole man; as it were a Lieutenant deputy, under God. Nothing eſcapeth

the Court of Conſcience: hither are brought the errours of the Vnderſtanding, the depravations of the Will, the tumults of the Affections, the diſtempers of the Mind, the diſorders of the Body, to receive their doom, to be approved or diſapproved, condemned or acquitted. She is furniſhed with all things, concurring to judgement; She hath right to accuſe, credit to witneſſe, power to judge; in her, theſe things are nor incompatible. When ſhe accuſeth, you cannot implead her, for her bill is good in law. When ſhee witneſſeth, you cannot diſprove her, for ſhe was preſent at the fact; when ſhe judgeth, you cannot appeal from her, for there is no higher power on earth. Therefore let us take the Conſcience of man, eyther in his eſtate corrupted, or regenerated; we ſee all humain Power is below, and conſequently can have no power to conſtrain her. As the ſight, cannot be forced, to diſcern that cloth black, which is white; nor the taſt, to judge honey, bitter, which is ſweet; no more can the Conſcience be any way compelled, to allow that which ſhe condemneth, or condemn that which ſhe alloweth. There bee two engines, commonly made uſe of, to batter the Conſciences of men; Sophiſtication, and Perſecution, firſt to enſnare men, with deceitfull ſhewes, and argumens; then if that will not ſerve, to fright and terrifie men, with violence and torments; theſe two, are exquiſitely planted, and practiſed, in the kingdome of Antichriſt, by that old Engineere of all miſchiefe, the Divell. Where the Jeſuits and other Emiſſaries, do compaſſe Sea and Land, and are ſent abroad, like Frogs and Locuſts, to ſeduce and captivate poore Proſelites, making them ſeaven times more, the children of the Devill; And the Inquiſition, that Court of darkeneſſe, and antichamber of Hell, is ſet up, as a chief piller of Popedome, to torture mens bodies, and rack their Conſciences, and drive men to death and deſperation. Yet all this, can goe no farther, then to force and afflict, and kill the body, but the Conſcience ſtill triumpheth, ſhee is free; though the hands bee bound, and the feet be fettered; this was well known, by that conſtant Martir who ſtood out, the brunt of both. —

Diſpu-

Disputare non possum, mori possum.

Dispute I cannot, but I can Dye: and so refute both your Arguments, and your torments. Death is the uttermost, that the power and malice of Man can doe; and no man, but hee may if he will, as well dye with a free Conscience, as live in it. But some man may say; have not many for feare of death or disgrace, renounced the Truth, against their Conscience? Many have indeed, but in doing thereof, they have rather defiled their Conscience, then forced it, for still it is their own voluntary act, judging by a false, erroneous light, that it is better for them, to forsake *Christ*, then to lose their estates, honours, or their lives: and that it is their own act; appeareth, by the punishment, which the justice of God, will lay upon them, for their own sin; and not for the sin of others, who were about to constrain them.

3. Nevertheless, the Conscience sitteth like a Queene, in the soule of man, commanding over all, and uncontrolled by any humane power. Yet shee vaileth and submitteth to the higher Powers, of God and his word, by which she standeth bound, to give full obedience, under the fearfull penalties, of Rebellion and sin. The reason is, because the word of God is infallible, but the word of man, very deceitfull; any thing propounded without the word of God, unlesse it bee demonstrative in it selfe, is subject to Error, though it bee never so well meant. But when the Conscience findeth in the word, a bottome to fix, and to stand upon, shee judgeth it, needlesse any longer, to halt or hold off; to doubt, or dispute, but shutteth her eyes, and believeth. The Conscience of her selfe, hath in every man, a naturall light, though it bee but dim and clouded, this was never quite extinguished, by the fall. By which divers Peoples and Nations, who never heard of *Jesus Christ*, nor had any glimpse of the light of his word, have bin able to discerne, not onely the truth of naturall things, but also groped after supernaturall; acknowledging a GOD

by

by his workes, though not knowing, how to worship him by his Word; and by the improvement of this light, they have attained, to many excellent morall Precepts, for the planting of vertue, in the hearts of men, and to admirable Lawes and Constitutions, for the government of them, in Societies and Statutes. Whereof many of them in both kinds, have been ratifyed and approved by the light of the Word revealed. Which plainely declareth unto us, that the naturall light of Conscience, is a beame, and remainder, of that divine light, which was at first infused into our Natures, afterwards obscured, by disobedience; and againe restored by Regeneration, in the soules of all true believers. All light wee know, transmitteth, and disputeth it selfe, *Ad modum recipientis*, to the capacity of the receiver. It leaveth stone Wals in darkenesse, but shadeth it self thorow glasse-windowes.

Now, transparent bodies are like illuminated soules, where *Iesus Christ*, the light of the World entereth, there is light indeed; there the Consciences of men, are so already enlightened, that they can judge of all things, and are judged of nothing, forasmuch, as they swerve not from the touchstone of judgement, the word of GOD. Now if any shall say, that the word of GOD is called a Law of liberty, rather freeing, then binding us up. I answer; that it is, truly so called, because it freeth us, from the bondage of Sinne, the servitude of Lust, and captivity of Satan: But by the same reason, that it releaseth us, from sinne, it bindeth us to obedience, and to the service of GOD, which is perfect freedome. There is a friendly way in the conversation of men; to bind those, who keepe a loose governance, of themselves, from lustfull things; some from Wine, some from fruit, some from unwholsome foode, to which they have an irregular appetite. Such is the singular love of GOD towards us, to tye up, by the Law of his Word, our unruly and inordinate Appetites, from

from the pursuit of sinfull and unlawfull things, which would prove our poyson, and perdition, in which regard we have great cause, to rejoyce in these bones; which are not irons of imprisonment, but bonds of perfection; retaining and with holding us, from relapsing into sin, and leading of us, into the glorious liberty of the Sonnes of God, in these bones there is no constraint, for God himselfe who made us, by his word, and can dissolve us, at his pleasure, will not use his power to constraine us; he delighteth not in a forced worship, but onely obligeth us to a willing obedience, by setting of us free.

3. The conscience therefore, unconstrained in it self, yet tyed up by the word standeth bound, to obey these lawes and decrees of the Magistrate, which are made by the light and the rule thereof, for the voice of the Magistrate speaking according to Gods word is like the voice of God among men, where God hath spoken clearly and expressly to the spirit and conscience of man there need no other lawes, but his owne, and so he hath done, in all matters, that concerne the substance of his owne worship, or our salvation, but in such things, which he hath not punctually determined, onely left them wrapped up in generall precepts; it behoveth us to learne from his deputies upon earth asking councell of the Lord what his mind and pleasure is, and such for the most part, are the outward rites, formes, and circumstances of his Evangelicall worship, these things fall within the compasse of order and decency, which are rather civill notions then devine, yet, as Armies in the field, easily fall into a rout, not well arrayed, so assemblies in the Church, and Churches in the Commonwealth prove but rude, and tumultuous meetings, if they be not decently ordered, a lute or violl is seen plaid upon; but there is much adoe, to tune many instruments, into one consort; private Christians may dispose of themselves, in their owne houses, but when they meet, in a publike body, they must be tuned by the publike Magistrate; the world would never have stood, without societies, nor can societies hold without government, neither can there be any government where some rule not, and some obey, all the question is, to set due limits and bounds to the civill

 government;

government; wherein I conceive, that there is the selfe, the same measure, betwixt the Magistrate and the conscience, for as the word of God bindeth the conscience to obey, so it prescribeth, the Magistrate to governe; otherwise if as the high Priest forbad the Apostles, to teach in the name of Jesus; so the Magistrate shall impose any thing upon the people, contrary to divine law, or the word revealed, the case is plain, that we ought to obey God rather then men.

These rubbs thus removed in our way, I shall proceed, to the solving of such objections, as are commonly made by those brethren, that challenge a liberty and exemption from this lawfull obedience.

1. First, they build upon our owne ground; alledging, that since the nature of conscience, is so free and voluntary in it self, it must needs be, a manifest violation of her freedome to constraine her, by laws, or penalties, or impositions of men. To which I answer, that we must remember to put a difference, betwixt the constraint, and the restraint of mens consciences, no law nor power of man, can constraine the conscience, in her voluntary act; to goe against her owne light, or approve that which she condemneth, or say to her self, conscience, I lye, no, she may and ought, rather to suffer, then undergoe such a constraint, but the lawes of man, may so farre, restrain their liberty, that she produce not the act, of her private sence and freedome, into hurtfull effects, such as may endanger and disturbe our christian and publike peace. it hath ben alwaies observed, that it is as naturall and appetitious for error, to beget error, & opinion, to spread opinion; as for one kind, to generate and multiply the same, insomuch, when an erroneous conscience, will not be limited nor contained within it self, it may and ought to be restrained and inhibited from infecting others, and dispersing the contagion.

2. Secondly, it may be againe objected, that although it be granted, nothing can bind the conscience, but the pure word of God, yet forasmuch, as no word of Scripture is produced, expressly confirming this form of polity and Presbyterian govern-

ment

ment, which we are commanded to obey; it will plainly follow, that the consciences of men, are therein left unto their liberty.

To give a full answer hereunto, it would be necessary to take the frame of this government in pieces. as the Levites did the Tabernacle, when they removed their Tents, and then bring it piece by piece, to the light of Gods word, to see what is thereby confirmed, and what unfirmed; But because this is already done by divers worthy brethren, of the holy calling, I shall forbeare to insert, their volumes, into these few sheets, and shall onely say, that this kind of government, is either expressly, or by good consequence included, and allowed by the Scripture, as not repugnant to it in any thing: Of the Presbytery it selfe, where the government is inherent, I heare no question made, but that it is expressly mentioned in the Scripture, the main doubt and difference is, whither it be Independent in particular Congregations, subordinate to Synods and Assemblies, as the urgencies and occasions of the Church may require; Those Brethren, that maintain Independency of single Congregations stand upon a ground, feeble and unfirm, saying that in the Apostles time, there were no other Churches, but onely congregationall, in which alone, all government was confined. This assertion will hold no further true, then in such Churches as were gathered whiles Christ was upon earth: then indeed we may conceive, that the first Evangelicall Church, consisted in the congregation of the Apostles, and afterwards of the Disciples; but when Christ ascended into heaven, and the holy Ghost descended upon earth, we shall find, that when the multitude of believers increased so much in several Cities, as one Congregation could not contain them; their manner was to distribute themselves into severall meetings, according to the commodity of their habitations in the said Cities, or else as it might most stand with their safety. Now th Apostles themselves, and their coadjutors th Evangelists and other Founders of Churches under them, did usually constitute and ordain Elders in every City, but not in every Congregation, who had power in common and collegially to teach and govern the whole flock, though severally congregated in the same City. That

Thus we read of the Elders of *Hierusalem*, of *Antiochia*, of *Ephesus*, of *Corinth*, of *Philippi*, and many mo, where the numbers of the faithfull were inlarged. Whereby it appeareth, that in the Apostles times, and the times succeeding, those primitive Churches were City Churches, consisting of divers Congregations, and not congregationall, as is pretended, Independent within themselves. True it is, the City church was commonly independent within it selfe, but thereof the reason was, because the Cities in their civill policy, were free and unsubjected; otherwise the government of the City Church, reached as farre as the jurisdiction of the City. If all this be true, as it is made most evident, by the unpartiall searchers of Antiquity, we may herein observe a pattern, though not a precept for the subordination of Churches; for if in the Apostles time, a City church consisted of many congregations, by the same proportion, according to the increase of Beleevers, a Provinciall Church, may consist of many Cities, and a Nationall Church of many Provinces, and the Catholick Church of many Nations; the lowest step was laid by the Apostles, the highest step is a point of our belief, and from the lowest to the highest, there is no passage but by gradations, which is the scale of that government, now held forth by Parliament. But to this may be replyed; All this, that you say, is but conjecturall, and that hath no power to bind the conscience, which must have a word infallible to rest upon. To this I answer, That for the substance of this government, wee have the infallible word of God, whereof neither part doubteth; for the frame and circumstances thereof, we have also the word of man as infallible, as mans can be, for that we may take upon good trust, to be morally infallible, which proceeds from men, who neither deceive, nor are deceived. Now I suppose, that the Parliament hath so fully declared their sincerity, and discharged their trust, in establishing this government, that the most opposite thereunto cannot admit of such an unworthy thought, as if they intended to impose any government upon the people, which in conscience, they thought not most agreeable to Gods word; which as it cleareth them, from the least suspicion of deceiving,

so

ſo it is alſo manifeſt, that they have uſed the beſt, and moſt approved means allowed to mortall man, not to be deceived; For in this waighty worke they have begun, with the invocation of Gods infallible Spirit, which is the Author and leader into all truth, and have aſſembled Learned and religious men of the holy calling, to enter into free deliberation, and debate, of that kind of Church-government, which they ſhou'd find moſt conſonant to Gods word; and if after all this, we can imagine they have erred in their decrees; How can we, without preſumption, conceive the judgement of any private men to be more infallible. Now if any ſhall think that this kind of government in every part thereof is eſtabliſhed, with ſuch a perpetuall decree, that it can never be changed; We muſt know that many things may be infallibly true, yet not alwayes neceſſary to be continued. True in the Author of truth, and true in the means of truth, and yet may be laid aſide, when they are no longer uſefull for edification, an example hereof, we may ſee in the ceremoniall Law, which being appointed by God himſelfe, no man will doubt, but it was infallibly true, and being aboliſhed by the ſame power that ordained it, no man need doubt, but that it was juſtly removed. Infallibility doth not alwayes inferre immutability. Things are not onely continued for their truth, but alſo for their goodneſſe, and fitneſſe, and applicableneſſe to preſent uſe. So long as the Ceremoniall Law, was to indure, it was of divine infallibility, needfull for the Church of the Jewes, and during that time, immutable, by any power but divine: but when the Evangelicall Law ſucceeded, which by fulfilling, ended the Ceremoniall; the worſhip of God became more ſpirituall, leaving the decencies, circumſtances, and outward manner, to the humane infallibility of the Magiſtrate, ſet in authority by God, whoſe decrees in ſuch matters, are unchangeable by any inferiour power, yet alterable by the ſame power that decreed them.

Moreover the Papiſts object againſt our doctrine that before *Luther* it was not known in thy world, and the Prelates object againſt our diſcipline, that before *Calvin* it was never known: by both with aſperſions, they think to diſgrace our doctrine, and our diſci-

plaine, putting upon them the ſtamp of novelty, as though they were but inventions of men. But as our doctrine hath been ſufficiently aſſerted againſt their calumnies, to be the very doctrine of the ſpirit of God, left & recorded in the holy Scriptures. So it is alſo plain, that this government of Gods Church, by the Presbytery was known and practiſed in the world, before either Popery or Prelacy was in being, both which are indeed novelties, and the very ſpawn of corrupted men. It is clearly demonſtrated from the boſome of Antiquity; That the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts knowing the mind of Chriſt, did in all Cities and places where they collected Churches, ordain a Colledge of Preſbyters called the Presbytery, with equall power to feed and govern the ſame. This form of government continued in the Primitive Church about 1500 yeares in puritie, and parity. Afterwards by pride, and contention of the leaders, Biſhops were ſet up above *Presbyters*, and when that equality was once broken there was no ſtop. Then Metropolitans were put above Biſhop, and *Patriarks* above Metropolitans, and at the laſt whereunto all tended, they brought forth that man of ſin, or ſon of perdition the Pope, who perked above all; and hath ever ſince contrary to the rules of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, maintained by fraud, fire, and blood, a prodigious tyrannie and oppreſſion in the Church. But there is one teſtimony more, which we can produce, as a cleare light out of the very darkneſſe, and dungeon of popery, when there was no day of knowledge in the Chriſtian world, but all was overſpread with Antichriſtian error, and that was about 500 yeares ago, when God moved *Waldo* a Citizen of *Lions* to diſcover the impoſtures of the popiſh Church, who drawing after him many diſciples were perſecuted by the bloody Synagogue, and driven from the ſociety of men, into mountains among beaſts, which they found leſſe ſavage then their own kind, there they multiplied into many Congregations, and ſpreading themſelves into divers places, were called by divers names. Then they found it neceſſary that the worſhip of God might be perfect among them, to eſtabliſh a diſcipline and government over all their Churches. In which deliberation they had no pattern to follow, no ſteps to tread in, no helps from ſtocks or records of antiquity, which were all deſtroyed or corrupted. Their

onely

onely guide, and light to direct them was the word of God, which the world was never able to extinguish, and by his divine power was preserved among them. There they sought, and there they found the platform of their discipline, and what was it? no other then Presbyterian; every Congregation governed by Pastors, Elders and Deacons, and as occasion required by a combination of them into Synods, Councells and Assemblies. Now if this way was practised among them, wherein they were onely led by divine light. How unjustly do some despise it as a novelty, others reject it as a humane ordinance. When as our own age also, searching in the same holy monuments hath pitched upon the same discipline, as in them held forth to the Churches of God. Me thinks this would move the spirits of meek and sanctified men not to be wise above sobriety, nor contest against such a cloud of witnesses. For if the Primitive Apostolicall times; the middle age of the Church under persecution, and now the last generations wherein we live, have all by the light of Gods word, and guidance of his spirit, concurred in one and the same discipline. Why should any combine against it, or suffer themselves to be perswaded rather to disturb the peace and unity of Gods Churches, then yield a Christian conformity thereunto.

3 But against this power of the Magistrate, it may be further objected, that although power be given him, over the bodies and estates, and outward adjuncts of men; yet the conscience is the peculiar Court of God, wherein man hath nothing to do, but by intrusion; when the body lies in prison, the Judge by a *habeas corpus* can remove it, but when the conscience is under bond, no Judge can send a *habeas conscientiam*, to deliver it, and having no power to release, he can have none to bind it. Hereunto I answer, that the Magistrate pretendeth not to take power upon himself, as a man equall to his brethren, but the power he hath is derived from the supream power, which he holdeth by Commission from God. His Office is the Ordinance of God, and his power is ordained of God, and so long as he ruleth for good, aiming at the publick order and edification of the Church, we read that of necessity he must be obeyed, a double necessity both for fear of bodily punishment, God having put into the Magistrates hand a sword of justice, which he

hath

hath not done into the Miniſters; as alſo for conſcience ſake, and fear of divine puniſhment, for men that make no conſcience of breaking the precepts of God ſhall certainly not go unpuniſhed; conſcience therefore yielding ſometimes in lawfull as well as in abſolute neceſſary things, this obedience to the Magiſtrate, is not bound by the will of the Magiſtrate, but by the word of God himſelf, which, expreſly commandeth us to obey the Magiſtrate for conſcience ſake; but we no where find that for conſcience ſake in ſuch things we ſhould diſobey him. If any reply that if all this collected and ſpoken to maintain the power of the magiſtrate is no more then was before alledged, in the times of Epiſcopall Prelacy; who by giving credit to the Magiſtrate, and the Magiſtrate to their cauſe impoſed and injoyned what they pleaſed in Gods worſhip, and government of the Church. I confeſſe indeed that they argued very ſtrongly for upholding the authority of the Magiſtrate, ſo farre, that by exalting his will, they diminiſhed his power, but leaving them in their exceſſe, I anſwer, that if their government had been as good as their argument, or had they ſtuck as cloſe to the word of God, in framing their Cannons and injunctions, as they did in aſſerting the lawfull power of the Magiſtrate, no man could have juſtly been grieved in conſcience, but their government being bad in it ſelf, could not be bettered by the goodneſſe of the argument. But it may be rejoyned again, that for all this, the Scripture doth no where appoint or confirm this Presbyteriall goverament, as it is held forth and eſtabliſhed by the State, and therefore juſt it is, that men ſhould be left in liberty of their conſciences, whether they would conform thereunto or no. This hath in part been anſwered before. That it is not the mind of the Magiſtrate to compell any man to conform thereunto againſt his conſcience, neither could he do it, although he ſo intended, and therefore in effect that is but a vain, feigned, and frivolous plea, to pretend that liberty againſt the Magiſtrate, which no Magiſtrate can conſtrain, onely as the Apoſtle ſaith of faith about indifferent things; *haſt thou faith, have it to thy ſelf before God.* So we may ſay in this caſe, haſt thou liberty, have it to thy ſelf bewixt God and thee, till he ſhall give thee a further light, and a liberty to obey, as well as to diſobey, but if thou contenteſt not thy

ſelf

ſelfe with this ſober and moderate liberty; but whilſt alſo leap over the hedge, and withdraw others from their Chriſtian obedience; then thou runneſt upon the ſword of the Magiſtrate, which God hath put into his hands for the common good, by which he is bound to reſtrain thy inordinate and offenſive liberty, that it diſturbe not the publike peace committed to his charge. To this may be added, that although this Presbyteriall government, in every part and parcell thereof, as it is now eſtabliſhed, be not expreſly commanded in Scripture (as likewiſe no other kind of government whatſoever) yet much may be brought for the approbation of it, and to ſhew that it is repugnant to Scripture. Firſt, government by a Presbytery, is expreſly ſet down in Scripture; Secondly, for execution thereof, ſome generall rules are alſo clearly expreſſed, That all things ſhould be done decently, and in order, without contention, and for edification. Thirdly, to whom can we imagine the ordering, and decencies, and edification ſhould belong, but onely to the Magiſtrate, aſſiſted by the advice of Gods holy word and Miniſters, wherein wee find another expreſſe command, that the Magiſtrate ſo judging for the good of all, ought to be obeyed for conſcience ſake. Bring we this cauſe to a paire of ſcales, and there we ſhall ſee it decided; put into one ſcale the judgement of the Magiſtrate, into the other the judgement of private men; put into either, the profeſſion of them both, to make the word of God the rule of their judgement; put in again, that upon ſearch therein, they meet with two ſeverall governments, neither of them directly commanded, nor directly forbidden, nor yet inconſonant to the Word. Hitherto the beam goes even betwixt them. Search again, what is to be put in more, and we ſhall find an expreſſe word of God, commanding every private ſoule to obey the higher powers, judging and governing for good, and that for conſcience ſake, put this into the Magiſtrates ſcale, and it muſt needs preponderate till we can find any other word, that biddeth the higher power be ſubject to the lower. And indeed, were there no word of Scripture to confirme this truth, the very light of reaſon might convince us, for if we allow that reaſon ſhould rule

our affections, we must also allow the Magistrate to rule the people and when any difference ariseth between them in such things wherein they pretend to judge by one and the selfe-same rule; reason requireth that the determination of the Magistrate should stand, and that the people should no longer be wise in their own conceit, but be wise with sobriety suffering their judgements to be over-ruled by their Rulers, whose office is to watch over them for good in the order of such things; Whiles things are debating every one may have liberty to speake their conscience, but when things are determined, the liberty of conscience must yeild to the duty of obedience, otherwise that sweet harmony would be broken, which God hath set in the world between parties commanding, and parties obeying, wherein alone consisteth the outward happinesse of all societies. In the mean time I am glad to observe, that they disclaim not civill obedience, to the civill power of the Magistrate, hoping that in time they will for the same reason cease to contend against this government, for that it is now indeed, or intended to be made a civill sanction, and a statute law. And then denying subjection thereunto; Liberty of conscience may aswell transport them to claim exemption from many other civill lawes. If one of them were accused of murder, and knew in his own conscience that he was innocent, and had besides twenty witnesses to clear him, yet if one single witnesse shall make oath against him, in behalfe of the King, he shall be condemned by the law. May he not stand upon termes of his liberty, and his innocence, and justly plead, that it is against his conscience to obey this law, and suffer sentence being innocent? Suppose another had lived many yeares separated from his wife, in which time she had divers children by another man; by the law he shall be injoyned to father them all; may he not plead, that it is against his conscience to take upon him the fathering of another mans children? Many such examples might be brought, wherein the consciences of men seem to have more just pretences, to withdraw their obedience, from such civill lawes, then from this law of government, so fully debated, and so duly established. Besides, inasmuch, as our brethren require a

toleration, of their own government they do tacitly acknowledge a power in the Magistrate, to regulate them, or deny them; and consequently, they may also acknowledge, that this power is either lawfull, or unlawfull, if it be lawfull, they are with us bound to obey it; if unlawfull, they are bound to disprove it; which when they go about, godly pens will not be wanting, to endeavour, to give them satisfaction.

❧ Moreover it is said by some, that whatsoever is imposed by man in the worship of God, not directly specified in his Word, falleth under the condemnation of will-worship, humane traditions, or inventions of men. This is too large an assertion to be ever well proved, for it is true neither way. Neither whatsoever is omitted in Scripture, to be rejected as will-worship; nor whatsoever is recorded in Scripture to be retained of perpetuall necessity. We read, that the first administration of Baptisme, used to be performed in open rivers, which with us would be thought rude and dangerous. The Saints had a custome in the close of their holy meetings, to salute one another with a holy kisse, which in our Congregations might be thought carnall and lascivious; they also were wont, after the celebration of the blessed Eucharist, to bring their provisions together, and make love-feast, which among us would be esteemed loose and luxurious. When a Brother or Sister was sick, the Elders of the Church were sent for, to pray over them, and anoint them with oile, which in our visitations might be held superstitious, or perhaps fitter for a Physician then a Minister. All these customes, and many others passed with edification, in the innocency and infancy of these first times; which not conforming with ours, are universally refused. On the other side, the times and places of divine worship, the feasts and fasts of the worshippers, the manner of publike Praying, and Preaching, singing of Psalms, of collecting Almes, of celebrating and dispensing the power, the forme of administration and receiving the holy Sacraments, and many other things concerning the outward publick communion of Saints, are for the most part neglected in Scripture, yet in full use and practise among us without offence, that therefore

must be understood for a will-worship, and humane invention, which is set up for some humane and carnall end, repugnant to Gods word, and to his glory.

5. There be yet remaining two more objections, arising from two contrary grounds, one from pretence of weakenesse, th'other from presumption of strength. Those that lay forth the tendernesse of conscience, forget not to produce those heavenly exhortations, whereof the Scripture is full; that we should not bruise the broken reede, nor offend the least of the little ones, nor cast stumbling blocks before our brethren, nor use our liberty to the destroying of the weake, but rather spread the covering of love over our brethrens infirmities, to raise up one another in the spirit of meeknesse; to beare with the weake, and please one another for good edification; yea, rather to abstain from matters, which we think lawfull, then to compell others to things, they judge unlawfull. This they say was the doctrine and the pattern, which Christ, and his Apostles taught, and practised among the faithfull; which, because I intend not to deny, I shall onely examine, how fitly they are applyed to the controversie in hand, and whether they be of force, to absolve weake brethren, from their due obedience, to Gods Magistrate.

We are therefore to understand, that all those excellent rules set down by the Apostles, for tendering of weak consciences, receive a double limitation; First, they were limited to the state of those times, with respect to the condition of private Christians, and their carriage one towards another. For in the Apostles age, nor long after, there was in the world neither Christian, Kingdome, Common-wealth, nor Magistrate, whereby these Rulers, were neither given to them, who were not then in being, nor for ought we find, intended so for them, when God should raise them up in his Church. The contrary rather appeareth; for Christ himselfe comming to set up a spirituall Kingdome, in his Church, intended onely to pull down the kingdom of Satan, but not the Kingdomes of the world, those he left standing, not refusing, to pay for himself and his Apostle, tribute to *Cæsar*, nor yet to answer before the Courts and Tribunalls of the Jewes.

After

After Christs example, th'Apostles were very carefull to instruct the faithfull, that they should walke with circumspection, without blame or reproach, lest if they should transgresse the law, or commit scandalls, or fall into divisions among themselves, they should make the name of God, and that holy profession, which they had undertaken to be blasphemed among the heathen; ordaining them moreover to make prayers, and supplications for all in authority, and to give them obedience for conscience sake, indeed the Gospell is called a law of liberty, because through Christ it freeth us from the bondage of sinne, the slavery of Satan, and the feare of death, not because, it dischargeth us of our Christian duty and obedience to the Magistrate, in which case, it giveth no liberty nor exemption. From whence we may conclude, that if Christ and his Apostles subjected the beleevers of those times, both by their precept and practise, to unbelieving powers; It was never their meaning, to exempt the faithfull of our times, from their due obedience, to Christian and believing Magistrates. Secondly, these Evangelicall rules, for the ease of tender consciences, respected especially indifferent things. The Christians of those dayes consisted of two sorts; the converted Jewes, and converted Gentiles. The Jewes trained up in the Ceremoniall Law, which they knew was appointed by God, made a conscience of meats, and dayes, and other rites, and rudiments of the time, as yet not convinced that they were abolished by the comming of Christ. These were then the weake Christians. On the other side, the Gentiles were fully instructed in their liberty, that they might use them, or not use them, as they pleased; They were then the strong Christians: The Apostle therefore, to lay the foundation of charity aright, and preserve these dissenting brethren in the unity of the Spirit, and bond of Peace, giveth these rules about indifferent things; That the strong should not despise the weake, nor the weake, censure the strong, because whether they eat, or eat not, they do it to the Lord, and are of him accepted; and being both accepted of the Lord, they ought not to be condemned by one another. In this case therefore, things, by nature indifferent, should make no

difference betwixt brethren: but so to be used, or not used, that now and then, for charity sake, the expediency of them, should suspend their lawfulnesse. This is the Apostles doctrine, instructing private Christians, about indifferent things. Which though they reach not the Magistrate in his office, yet they do, in his profession; having given up his name to Christ, and living in a Christian society. And hath our religious Magistrate transgressed these rules? Let us see what he hath done, for the reliefe of tender consciences; many grievances were complained of, in the Episcopall times, which the Parliament hath removed; They have taken away consecration of dayes and places, the superstition of meats and drinks, Images and Altars, Crosses and Surplices; the usurpation of spirituall Courts, and temporall Bishops; which were all abused with a danger to introduce Popery and Idolatry: will not these things, satisfie weake and tender consciences, unlesse they take away Government also, which is commanded, and sanctified by the Word? therefore we must know, that government of the Church, in publike Assemblies, is no indifferent thing, nor to be reckoned in their number; God is not the Author of anarchy and confusion; but of order, comlinesse, and peace: and when the manner of government, and Gods worship, in the circumstances thereof, are rightly ordered, according to the light of nature, and Christian prudence, deduced from the generall rules set down in the Word, and setled by just and lawfull authority. It is no longer left to the liberty of any man, subject to the same authority, to conform, or not conforme thereunto, as though it were a thing indifferent, much lesse, to pretend, that because their consciences cannot approve thereof it should be permitted to them, to set up another government; which seemeth to be a most unreasonable demand, that whiles they deny obedience to the Magistrates lawes, they should nevertheleſſe seek for liberty and power from them, to overthrow their own orders, and make them, crosse themselves, with their own authority. The power of the Magistrate and liberty purchased by Christ, do not destroy, but support one another; for they are both truths, avowed in the Word, and no truth can overthrow

another.

another. And if any man say, that a weak conscience, though it be in an error, yet till it be convinced, should sin, in obeying the truth; it may be replyed *à fortiori*, that the Magistrate determining the truth, cannot tolerate any error, without sinning against his conscience, and partaking of those errors, he condemneth.

6. But the other objection, proceeding from a conceit of strength, marcheth with more assurance; for some imagine, that forasmuch, as they are justified by grace, and freed from sin, and heirs of the promise; they are consequently in a state of perfection, able to fulfill the law of God, and delivered from all lawes of men. For, *Iam non possunt justo*; They have no need of repentance, being secur'd from falling. Nor much of faith, being already in fruition they are a law unto themselves, under no Magistrate, above all penalty, as if they were out of the flesh, having shaken off frailty and mortality, and climed up to the new *Jerusalem*, where there is neither sin nor sorrow. This being a sweet fancy to them, that are possessed with all, will hardly suffer it selfe to be removed, by force of argumentation: Otherwise we might say; That never any man, was without sin, but Christ alone, who was like to man in all things, sin excepted. That the blessed Apostle felt a law in his members, which made him doe that he would not, and will, that he did not. He biddeth us work out our salvation, with fear and trembling, not with surquedry and presumption; when we have done our best, and seem to be most perfect, we are but unprofitable servants. Many such divine testimonies, might be brought, to convince this opinion; but it refuteth it selfe, being contrary to the rule of faith, and condition of humanity. We must not think, that the grace of God, worketh against his will; his will is, that we should be militant, in this life; wherefore we must not expect to be triumphant, till the warre be done; his will is, that we should grow to our full stature by degrees; and scale the ladder of heaven, not be taken up in a whirlwind. His will is, that we should be tempted and buffered, and fall and rise; that seeing our frailty and our misery, we should seek for the renewing of his grace, and every

day

day beg, our daily pardon, more duly, then our daily bread. For, asmuch as by ſtrength of nature, we may abſtain awhile from food, but by corruption of nature, we cannot abſtain awhit from ſin. This error puffing up the hearts of unſtable men, hath heretofore brought forth furious, and pernicious effects.

The ſtory of *John a Leyden*, and *Knipperdolling*, and of their phrenſies at *Munſter*, is not yet forgotten. I pray God our times be not pregnant, of ſome ſuch monſter. What is the meaning, that ſo many in our dayes, ſeparate from their brethren, as if all others were prophane? Why do they gather in heaps together, like biles and ulcers, drawing the corruption with them, and yet ſay the body is unclean? In ſuch manner, began they of *Munſter*; they took upon them a garb of ſimplicity, they ſeemed grave and dejected, fervent in long prayers, full of revelations, lamenting the faſhions and prophaneſſe of the times, contemning honours, deſpiſing money, and neglecting Matrimonie, wiſhing, and weeping for reformation; by ſuch hypocriſies they captivated, weak and wandring ſoules, who tooke them onely, to be the little flock of heaven, that lived among wolves, and was perſecuted on earth. Till having made up their muſters, and aſſembled their troops, they ſet up a ſtandard, calling the multitude, into their ſnare, under the promiſe, and proclamation of liberty. Now the bleſſed time was come, that the meek ſhould inherite the earth; that the Kings and Potentates, and *Adonibezecks* of this world, who had done diſpite and violence to the Saints, ſhou'd be broken with a rod of iron, and daſhed in pieces like a Potters veſſell. Thence they fell into revelations, and found it written in the beams of the Sun, that *John a Leyden*, was appointed by Chriſt, to be King over all the world, and rule the Nations in righteouſneſſe and in power. After this, the King was inſpired, to ſet up ſundry Queens and to take to himſelfe many wives at once, to increaſe and multiply the holy ſeed upon earth. But this imaginary kingdome was of ſhort durance; for the neighbour Princes, finding their deſigne, joyned againſt them, as againſt the enemies of mankind: and after they had indured a long ſiege; their King, by revelation, aſſured them, that before Eaſter, they ſhould have

deliverance.

deliverance. But when none appeared, he told them, that he had been in a trance six dayes, in which time he had ridden on a blind Asse, and that God the Father, had laid upon his back, the sinnes of them all, whereby they were set free and delivered from them; And this was the deliverance he promised, wherewithall, they ought to rest contented; Thereupon the Town was taken, the deluded people, disabused, the King impostor, executed to death, and hung up in chaines, upon the highest steeple, thus ended this tragedy, and ever tragicall is the end of such follies; The Apostle noteth, that factions and divisions, are signes of carnality; first, men separate from others, as unclean, then they speak evill of government, the next step, is to blind the people with revelations; from thence they fall into snares of the flesh; at last, they stir up sedition, and last of all, their end is destruction.

Hitherto, I have laboured to shew, that the Magistrate, by his office, being an ordinance of God, is bound to provide for the Publick peace and safety in Church and Common-wealth, which is done first by enacting just lawes, and wholsome orders, consonant to wisdome, and the word of God; and secondly, by using his power, to preserve them, in vigor and execution; as also to shew, that the people are bound in conscience, to give willing obedience, to such Lawes and orders of the Magistrate, whose duty it is, to restrain the disobedient, and reduce them, to their duty; Nevertheless, forasmuch, as the power, wherewithall God hath invested the Magistrate, is alwaies to be used for publike good; and requisite it is, that a due distinction be made in the punishment of offenders, between such as erre out of mistake or ignorance, and those that resist, out of wilfulnesse and contempt. I shall in all humblenesse propound some few expedients how farre the Magistrate may please to sharken his power, and so temper the lawes, and penalties thereof; as they may serve both wayes, as lenitives for the simple, and corrasives for the stubborn, who will not otherwise be reformed.

1. I conceive, that as it is unreasonable to demand, so it would be dangerous to grant any toleration of Religion, besides that which is established, for such a liberty of conscience, would breed

a freedome of will, and freedome of will would beget liberty of life, which would breed a fearfull Independency, when every one might do what they list; In matters of faith, necessary to salvation, there is but one way, and one truth; all the rest is obliquity and error. Therefore when the truths hath been tried by the Word, and ratified by the Magistrate, he cannot suffer any falshood, without being accessary thereunto; Yet in matters of discipline and government, there is a greater latitude; for when it shall appeare, that weak brethren, agreeing in the same confession of faith but dissenting in outward forms, out of tenderneſſe or ignorance, to such a toleration, or connivence, or suspention of laws, may be harmleſſe and charitable, till they be further satisfied and instructed.

2. That whosoever living under the subjection of this state, should be so far destitute of grace as to renounce Christ, or speak blasphemously of him, or any person of the Trinity, contrary to the faith established in the Church, he shall upon conviction, be informed of the truth, with a brotherly admonition, not to divulge his error, to the corruption or scandall of others, or disturbance of the civill peace. For the second offence, he shall indure a years imprisonment, be disabled in his testimony, put out of protection of the Laws and wear some publike mark, noting him for a Blasphemer. For the third offence he shall suffer banishment; or close and perpetuall imprisonment; and if banished it shal be capitall for him to return without licence of the State. For if he by our lawes deserveth death, that seduceth any subject from the allegeance of his naturall Prince, what deserveth he that seeketh to alienate the soule of any Christian, from the dependance of God, unto the divell?

3. If any one, out of an evill heart, shall break forth into open reviling, scorning, disgracefull words against the present Church-government, now established, he shall not be connived at, as a man of tender conscience; for as he giveth himselfe power and liberty to dis-joyn from it, so it is also in his power, not to speak evill of it, but doing it by choice and deliberation, he cannot fall within the compasse of weaknesse. For he that maketh no conscience of giving offence and scandall to the Christian Magistrate,

and

and all his godly brethren, living in peaceable obedience; cannot imagine that his private fancies, though covered with weakneſſe, ſhould be more tendered, then the publike conſcience of the Common-wealth. Such a one therefore ought to be puniſhed, as a contemner of the civill power. Firſt, by reproof and exhortation, not to diſquiet the peace of the Land; Secondly, by a pecuniary mulct, for ſome publike uſe, with diſability of his credit; Thirdly, if he ſtill perſiſt, with cloſe impriſonment, till he give publike ſatisfaction of his repentance.

4. Forasmuch, as no man ought to undertake the office and function, of the holy Church Miniſtry, without he be well aſſured of his inward calling thereunto; neither can ſuch men conceive themſelves, a whit the worſe, or that it might be any prejudice to their ſpirituall gifts, to have an outward approbation, by laying on the hands of the Presbytery, and praying for divine bleſſing upon their perſons, and giving them an orderly miſſion, into Gods harveſt? Therefore whoſoever ſhall take unto himſelfe the holy calling, preſuming to preach the Word, or adminiſter the Sacraments, not being admitted, nor ordained thereunto, by lawfull authority; he ought to be puniſhed as the former were, that contemned the civill power, or rather more ſeverely; eſpecially if they be found in their publike preaching, to ſow ſedition among the people; provided, that ſuch perſons, Maſters of families, or others, meeting in their own houſes, or in their neighbours, to repeat what they heard or learned, out of Sermons preached by authority; and upon that or the like occaſion, worſhip God by praying or ſinging of Pſalmes, conferring or arguing, upon any part of the Word preached, as alſo ſuch, who being required, by any friend or neighbour (where the advice of Miniſters cannot be had) to come and expound ſome text of Scripture, or deliver his judgement upon any caſe of conſcience, for ſatisfaction of the parties, be not comprehended under this Article, or any penalty thereof, becauſe we are commanded to exerciſe the gifts and talents, God hath given us, in a ſober and orderly way, for the edification of one another.

5. Whereas out of all doubt, many things are contained in

holy Scripture, which are not yet fully manifested, not clearly understood; and we know the Spirit of God, bloweth where he listeth, and is not confined, to time, place, nor person, but inspireth whom he pleaseth. If therefore any man shall preveed, to have a new opinion, or new light revealed unto him, in the sence of any part of Scripture, sirring it were, he should bring his knowledge to some godly Minister, approved of; or to the next Classis, where he liveth, there to be tried and examined by the spirit of the Prophets, judging and determining by the word of God, and if perchance they neither approve of his opinion, nor yet be able to convince him; then to refer him, to the next Nationall Councell to which he must stand or fall. In the mean time, if he publish his opinion, under hand, to the breach of brotherly unity in the Church; he ought to be taken, as a disturber of publike peace, and subject to the penalties mentioned in the third Article.

By these and such like means, the power of the civill Magistrate, may be preserved from contempt; and the consciences of weak brethren from constraint; till they shall pluck off their mask, and discover themselves to be obstinate, and unsufferable; clamouring for toleration, under pretence of weakenesse; but indeed, making a breach and separation, in confidence of their own strength and perfection, disdaining with supercilious eies, the infirmities of their brethren; by which falacie, they think to bleare the eye of the Magistrate, and make the weak, to overthrow the strong. To such wolves in sheeps cloathing, whether they be Papists, Heretickes, Schismaticks, or whatsoever they be (for a weak conscience, is now-adaies, become a cloak, for all mischiefes) my meaning is not, that any indulgence or connivence of the Magistrate, should be extended to them, who in so plain manner are employed in malicious designes, working underground, the divisions and ruine of the State.

Therefore to conclude with the same spirit, as I began; which is a spirit of unity, peace, and love. In the sight, and before the face of Almighty God, and by the bowells of those love, wherewith Christ Jesus loved us all; I do beseech these opposers, whether they

be

be leaders or followers, that agree with us in the same doctrine, but dissent in government; to lay their hands upon their hearts, and examine, what they would be at. Is it, at the advancement of truth, the practise of holiness, the purity of Gods worship? Let them consider, whether all these may not be had, as they are all intended under the present government; is it at spirituall perfection, whiles they are present in the flesh? Let them consider, that the perfection of a Christian, consisteth, in humility, love, peace, meeknesse, sobriety and uprightnesse, which are truly spirituall, and none of them excluded, by this government. Is it at the setting up of the kingdome of Christ Jesus; that he might raigne, as Lord omnipotent upon earth? Let them consider, that the kingdome of Christ Jesus, is not of this world, he prescribeth no forms, nor modells of civill government, as he findeth them, so he leaveth them, where he is received; he sublimeth and refineth them where he is not received, hee doth not destroy them. Let them consider, that this present government, doth no waies eclipse the kingdome of Christ Jesus; for whither it be placed, in a single Congregation, or in a generall Assembly, or in the last resort of the separate Magistrate; all are under the government of Christ Jesus, who ruleth among them, by his Word, whereunto, they conform their government: is it at the setting up of any other government, which they think is onely divine, and necessary to salvation? Let them consider, that by such assertions, they do not onely blast all reformed Churches at this day, and leave them in a state of condemnation living under another government, but also condemn [illegible] of [illegible] departed, which under other governments, lived Saints upon earth, died martyrs for the faith of Christ, and are now triumphants in heaven. Or als is it at no government at all, till they receive an revealed from heaven? Let them consider, whether any such promise be made us in Scripture, which we ought to expect; This was find, that God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace, order, and government, which ought to be sealed in all Churches of the Saints. Or lastly, is it to set up an infallibility of private judgement, taking themselves to abound in the spirit,

and be able to judge all above them? Let them consider, that the hearts and spirits of men, are deceitfull, above all deceits, as that to strive and contend, to make rents and separation for these things, to despise the powers and ordinances of God, are reckoned among the workes of the flesh, rank and carnall. But if it be as I will hope it is, a pure and sincere weakness of conscience, arising from a weakness of judgement; not yet seeing the clearness of that light, which hath inlightned the Magistrates and Ministers, and greatest part of the Kingdome. Let them be intreated in the fear of God, to seek to him for further illumination; and in the mean time, to suspend their opinions, and forbear contentions by Christian modesty and moderation, becomming the Saints, to maintain Christian charity, which is the bond of perfection, and make it manifest unto the world, and to the Angells in heaven, that they are not led, by the spirit of error, strife and vain-glory, but by the spirit of truth, which worketh by love, and lowlinesse, patience and meeknesse; minding the same things, and improving the gifts of faith, & grace and knowledge, whereunto they have already attained. And in other things of lesser moment, concerning the formes of discipline and government, and the outward face of order and decency in the publike worship, whereunto perhaps not having yet attained, they may be otherwise minded thereinto wait Gods time, with quiet and patience, who hath promised to reveale, even that also unto them, that one may not be perfect, without another. It may be, they may thinke themselves unkindly deale withall, and very ill requited, that having so frankly adventured their lives and estates, and done so valiantly, against the enemies of God and the Land, they should after all this, be denyed any request, especially, that which so nearly toucheth, their freedome of conscience, and inward peace. Truly it is on all hands confessed, and no man that I know, seeketh to cast a vaile over their worth, or suppressed their atchievements. God hath done wonderfull things; by many of their hands, and the lesse honour, they take to themselves, the more will be given them, by the voice of the Nation, and Rulers of the land, who ought to take care, that their names be

written in the Registers of fame, from generation to generation. But what will our dissenting brethren say, if Jesuits and Malignants converse among them, in sheeps-clothing; if transformed into Angels of light, they carry on these workes of darknesse, and by secret suggestions, and insinuations of the Serpent, make them blow this cole, and widen this breach against their own intentions? It is not for nought that there be so many popish spies and Agents among us; whose employment is, to weaken the hands of the Magistrate, by sowing factions and disobedience among the people. They feele their blow, and know well enough that their form is broken, they are upon their last gaspe, and their last refuge is this, to compasse that by treachery and mischiefe, which they could not do, by force in the field; If they can divide the civill and Military power, and fling fire-balls of division into the tents of brethren, they have yet a fainting hope to recover strength, and destroy them both. Let not our brethren think this, to be an easy or empty admonition; for there be men so finely spirited, and ratified to the invisibility of the divell, that if it were possible, they would deceive the very Elect, and weave their hypocriticall webbs, with liberty, that commonly the simple, and many times the circumspect are involved, and taken. Happy it were, that by some marke, they might be known, for then they were easily avoided; but when they come, to strike up division, and separate the hearts of the brethren; the safest remedy is to stop our eares, as against Inchanters, and Negotiators for the divell. Return then ô Shulamite, return, return; be not intrapped in the shapes of division; but return to the tents of peace: what will ye see in the Shulamites? we shall see, when he returneth and joyneth his body to the State, and his conscience to the Church, that his countenance is faire as the Moon, clear as the Sun, terrible as an Army with banners; and that his company united to the Common-wealth, is like the association of two Armies, linked together by one heart, invincible and undissolvable, by the powers of darknesse and of Antichrist.

Thus have I delivered my poor judgement, and discharged my duty,

duty, which I owe to the publike peace. I pretend not to revelations, nor an unerring spirit; but being privy to the evenness of mine own heart, and unbyassed intentions; my conscience is my testimony, that I have not erred, to cause any other man to erre. In regard whereof, I may hope, that all men who are spirituall, and dis-interessed in their ends, will acknowledge this to be the mind of Christ, so far-forth at least, as it aimeth and tendeth to piety and peace. Nevertheless, if any will be still contentious and dissent, neither I, nor the Churches of God, have any such custome; nor do I intend, for this difference of judgement, to breake charity and communion with them. But I rather beseech them, for a close of all; to put on milde and gentle affections; and whiles they approve of our faith, not to disapprove our workes, by excommunicating of us, or separating from us; till our workes go before us, and condemn our selves. Leaving them, in this assurance, that when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come, the Judge and Master of us all, to whom we must stand or fall; it will be better for them, and for us in that day, that he find our hearts established in grace, then our selves at variance about Church-government.

FINIS.